

TELEGRAM

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FROM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA CLASSIFICATION: ~~SECRET~~ R

12356
E.O. 11652
TAGS:
SUBJECT:

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PREL, PBOR, XK, HO, MASS
MEETING WITH PRESIDENT SUAZO

CN: 2382

ACTION: SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE
INFO: AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

~~SECRET~~ TEGUCIGALPA ~~SECRET~~ 2382

EXDIS DECAPTIONED

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1. ENTIRE TEXT.
2. Ambassador accompanied by political counselor met with President Suazo March 10 to discuss a number of developments since the Ambassador's consultations in Washington. Ambassador began by congratulating Suazo on the successful Papal visit. Suazo said it had the perfect ending when the Pope made an overflight of La Paz to bless the President's hometown.
3. Ambassador drew Suazo's attention to President Reagan's speech on Central America, leaving him a copy of the text. Ambassador noted that Salvadorans had decided to advance date of their elections, an idea which Suazo had advocated forcefully in meeting with Ambassador Kirkpatrick and others, and

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OPTIONAL FORM 153
(Formerly FS-413)
January 1975
Dept. of State

Dept. of State, RPS/IPS, Margaret P. Grafeld, Dir.
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per Department's instructions (ref A) suggested that a statement by the GOH praising this decision could fortify the moderate Salvadoran elements who were behind the electoral process. Suazo noted Honduras had made such statements concerning moves toward constitutionality in Guatemala and agreed that a similar statement in this case would be useful. Ambassador said he would raise idea with Foreign Minister Paz Barnica the next day.

4. In discussion of proposed Central American Foreign Ministers' meeting, Suazo observed that Paz Barnica reported indications that Managua would not attend (ref B). We noted that we had some very recent indications that Nicaraguan attendance may after all be possible, and therefore it was important to prepare carefully. The US supported Honduras' initiative to hold the regional foreign ministers meeting, but of course if the Sandinistas did attend they would seek to exploit the meeting in every way possible. One likely Sandinista tactic would be to focus discussion as much as possible on Nicaraguan/Honduran problems, including the familiar Sandinista accusations about "the contras". The Ambassador left with Suazo a non-paper containing the Department's analysis of some of the points on which special care should be taken by the democratic states at the meeting (ref C).

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5. The Ambassador commented that Guatemala's position on attending the conference still seemed less than totally clear; if Managua accepted but Guatemala did not that could present an embarrassing situation. Suazo agreed and said he saw the need to proceed fairly quickly to hold a meeting of the foreign ministers of El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica and Guatemala in order to reach clear agreement on the position which the four would bring to the meeting. Suazo said he was uncertain how to be sure one had reached Rios Montt's ear; certainly, Castillo's influence has been questionable.

6. Finally, the Ambassador noted that a major part of President Reagan's new package for Central America was to increase ~~increase~~ military training assistance for El Salvador. Washington had asked us to explore with President Suazo and General Alvarez their views on the possibility of conducting some of the training for Salvadoran troops in Honduras. The Ambassador noted he had mentioned the idea to Alvarez that morning. There would obviously be political costs involved for Honduras, especially criticism by the left, but there appeared to be greater benefit in terms of helping the GOES defend itself, ~~was~~ which was desired by ~~desired by all three~~ all three of our countries. Suazo listened carefully, acknowledging the desirability of helping the Salvadoran Army. He did observe that

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the National Congress might have to become involved because, according to the ~~KANXX~~ Constitution it has the power to authorize the "transit" of foreign troops through Honduras. Suazo said he would discuss the subject with Alvarez and perhaps it would be raised at a National Security Council ~~MEETING~~ meeting that weekend. The Ambassador said that if the President and General Alvarez wished, we could send here a team of military experts who could discuss in more detail exactly what would be entailed by our proposal.

7. Suazo closed the meeting by noting his concern with the latest round of unsuccessful border delineation talks with El Salvador. ~~(SECRET)~~. Suazo claimed that Chavez Mena had virtually acknowledged to the Hondurans that he did not want to do anything in the border talks which might jeopardize his Presidential aspirations. Suazo offered his personal view that Napoleon ~~ANASTE~~ ^{Duarte} was preferable as Christian Democratic candidate and President. Durate had a clearly defined position, moral standing, and an excellent relationship with Venezuelan and other Christian Democratic leaders around the world. Suazo expressed fear that D'Aubisson and Chavez ~~ANASTE~~ ^{Mena} might conspire to include provision in Constitution which precludes Duarte from running.

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8. In response to Suazo's appeal for US assistance in urging the Salvadorans to move the border talks forward, the Ambassador responded that he personally did not believe the provisional government in San Salvador would be capable of taking the required decisions. In any event, it was difficult for a third country such as ourselves exert much influence since any pressure on our part could provoke a negative GOES reaction and be construed as taking sides in matter. Suazo responded that he was not very impressed by argument that Salvador government could not take decisive steps on border talks because it is weak, transitional government. Suazo recalled that he was President of Constitutional the ~~EXHIBITION~~ Assembly in 1980 when Peace Treaty ~~was~~ with El Salvador was signed. Honduras government was a transitional one at the time; yet Suazo was personally willing to take a risk for peace then. He felt that GOES should be willing to do so now. He urged us to do what we could to bring GOES to discuss these matters seriously, while acknowledging that we could not put ourselves in position of taking sides.

9. COMMENT: We must await Suazo/Alvarez reaction on training of El Salvador troops. If they agree in principle, I believe suitable next step would be for

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USCINCSO to send small team of experts to Tegucigalpa to discuss nature and extent of training contemplated in greater detail with Alvarez.

10. Both Alvarez and Suazo want to help save El Salvador; at same time, residual historical fears surface easily. Suazo is upset about lack of progress in border delineation/demarcation, Alvarez is worried that after communists defeated in El Salvador historic rivalries may once again come to the fore. Therefore, he worries about Honduran/Salvador balance of forces. Also, he says any training of El Salvador forces must be away from common border so they don't learn too much about what is on Honduran side. Alvarez said he thought department of Olancho would be a suitable site.

10. Department please repeat DOD, JCS and USCINCSO. Also request Department's authority to send direct messages on subject of possible training of El Salvador forces in Honduras to military addressees.


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